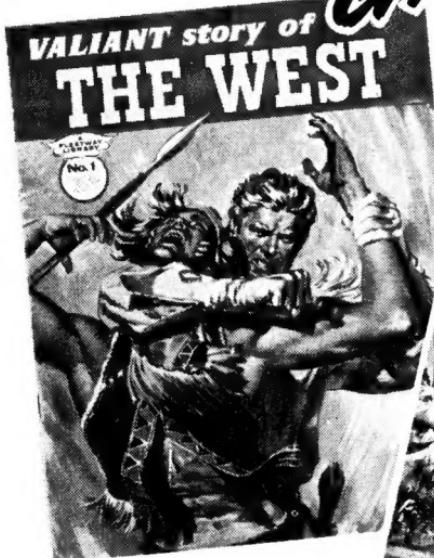


Relentlessly the Catalina stalked its prey — then pounced !

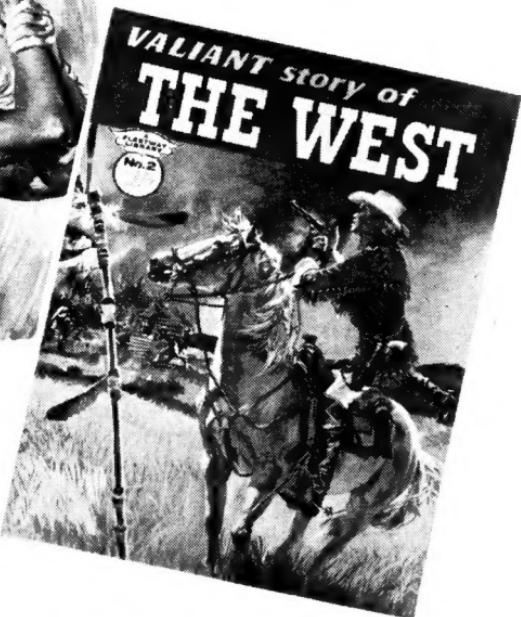
SUB HUNTER



THEY DARED THE UNKNOWN!



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STORY IN
PICTURES
OF THE MEN
WHO
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SUB HUNTER

DURING WORLD WAR 2, THE CREWS OF COASTAL COMMAND AIRCRAFT COVERED MILLIONS OF MILES OF VITAL PATROLS. THEY HUNTED THE SINISTER U-BOATS, PROTECTED CONVOYS, AND ATTACKED ENEMY SHIPPING WHEREVER THEY FOUND IT ... AND NO AIRCRAFT WON MORE FAME THAN THE LONG-RANGING CATALINA FLYING-BOATS. THIS IS THE STORY OF THE CREW OF SUCH A CATALINA WHO WON THROUGH TO GLORY AFTER A TRAGIC MISTAKE.



CHAPTER 1. Panic Pilot

BOB 'SKIP' M'GUIRE AND HORACE RANKIN WENT TO SCHOOL TOGETHER. THEY WERE QUITE DIFFERENT IN CHARACTER AND PERSONALITY, AND DISLIKED EACH OTHER INTENSELY. THE FEUD WHICH HAD SIMMERED DURING THEIR SCHOOLDAYS STILL FLARED WHEN THEY BOTH WENT TO FLYING TRAINING SCHOOL. BUT THEIR INSTRUCTOR KNEW NOTHING OF THIS.

WELL, YOU'VE
BOTH DONE YOUR FIRST
SOLO FLIGHT. I'D NOW LIKE
YOU TO CLIMB TO FIVE THOUSAND FEET
AND DO A FEW CIRCUITS. WATCH OUT FOR
THOSE CLOUDS. DON'T GET LOST
... AND DON'T RUN INTO
ONE ANOTHER!





THE INSTRUCTOR HAD ALREADY DISCOVERED THAT SKIP WAS A NATURAL FLYER. RANKIN WAS SLOW AND PAINSTAKING AND WENT BY THE BOOK. AND SO IT PROVED WHEN THEY FLEW HIGH OVER THE FIELD.



Sub Hunter

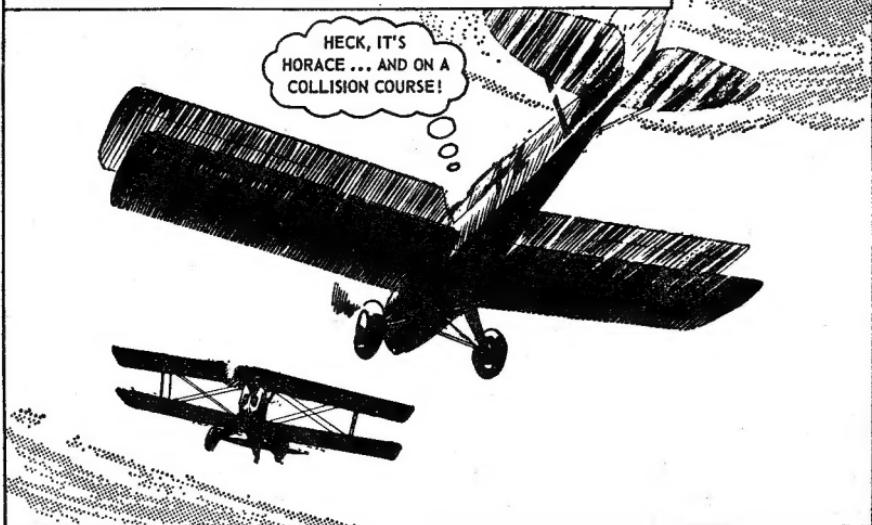
REVELLING IN THE FLIGHT, SKIP PULLED UP THE NOSE AND HEADED FOR A WOOLLY CLOUD.



FOR A FEW MINUTES SKIP STOOGED ABOUT IN THE DAMP, CLINGING MIST OF THE CLOUD.



ENGINE IDLING, SKIP PLANED DOWN OUT OF THE CLOUD AND WIPE MIST FROM HIS GOGGLES IN TIME TO SEE ANOTHER PLANE FLYING TOWARDS HIM.



OBEYING THE RULES OF THE AIR, SKIP EASED HIS CONTROLS TO PULL HIS PLANE OVER TO THE RIGHT.

PASS ON THE
RIGHT - THAT'S WHAT
THE BOOK SAYS. HOPE RANKIN
REMEMBERS!



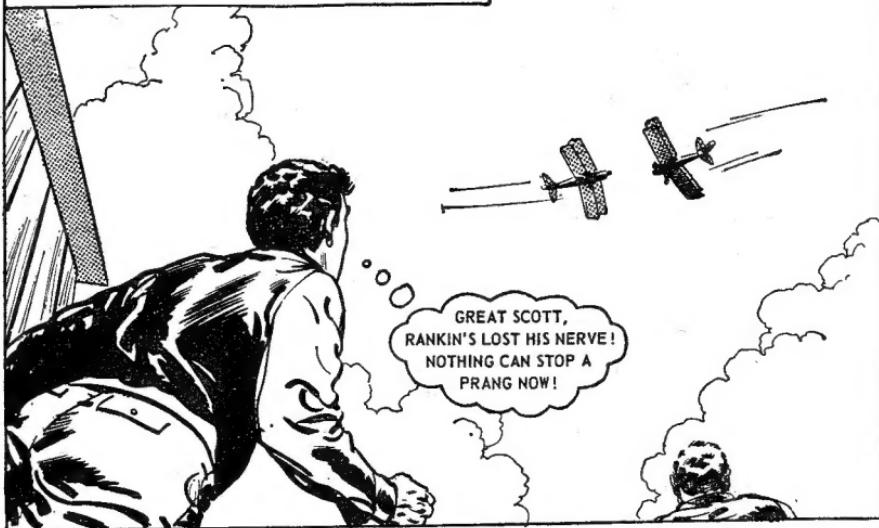
BUT TO SKIP'S HORROR, HORACE RANKIN ALSO PULLED OVER ... TO THE LEFT!

YOU IDIOT,
RANKIN! TURN RIGHT!
BY THUNDER, HE'S PANICKED!
HE'S FORGOTTEN ALL HE
WAS TOLD!



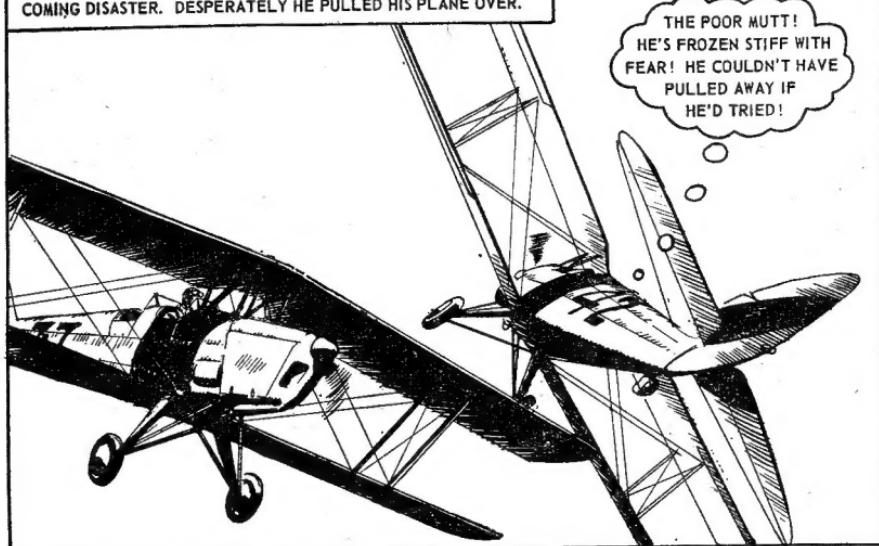
Sub Hunter

ON THE GROUND, THE INSTRUCTOR STARED TENSELY INTO THE SKY, EXPECTING A SHATTERING COLLISION.



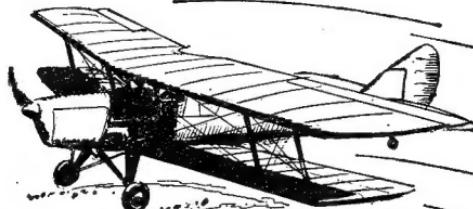
BUT SKIP M'GUIRE ACTED WITH A SPLIT-SECOND REACTION TO THE COMING DISASTER. DESPERATELY HE PULLED HIS PLANE OVER.

THE POOR MUTT!
HE'S FROZEN STIFF WITH
FEAR! HE COULDN'T HAVE
PULLED AWAY IF
HE'D TRIED!



SKIP BANKED WIDELY AND SAW HORACE RANKIN GO BOUNCING DOWN TO A SHAKY LANDING.

HE'S MUFFED
THAT, TOO! BY
GOSH, HE'LL KILL
HIMSELF!



BY NOW RANKIN HAD LOST ALL CONTROL. HE HID HIS FACE AS
THE PLANE CRASHED DOWN AGAIN AND RACED ON CRAZILY.

I'VE
HAD IT ... IT'S
THE END!



Sub Hunter

SKIP M'GUIRE LANDED FAST AND RACED TO THE SCENE . . .



SKIP DREW UP BESIDE RANKIN.

YOU CERTAINLY
PRANGED THE OLD KITE!
DO YOU FEEL ALL
RIGHT, HORACE?

LEAVE
ME ALONE,
CURSE YOU!



RANKIN'S VOICE TREMBLED
WITH SHOCK AND ANGER.

YOU INFERNAL
IDIOT. IT WAS
YOUR FAULT . . . DIVING
OUT OF THAT CLOUD
RIGHT IN MY FLIGHT
PATH!

HEY,
STEADY ON,
OLD SON!

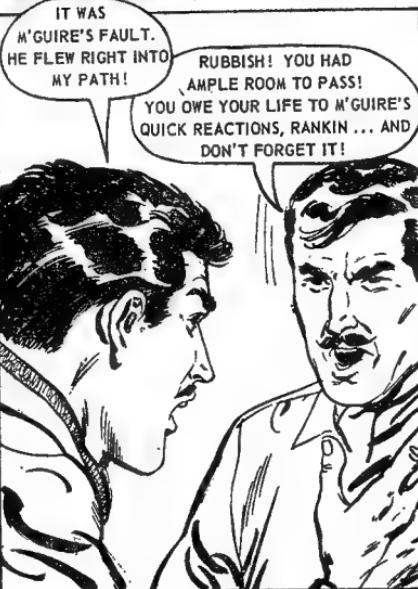


SKIP HELD HIS TEMPER IN CHECK, EXPECTING A VIOLENT ATTACK FROM RANKIN. BUT THE INSTRUCTOR'S HARD VOICE BROKE IN.

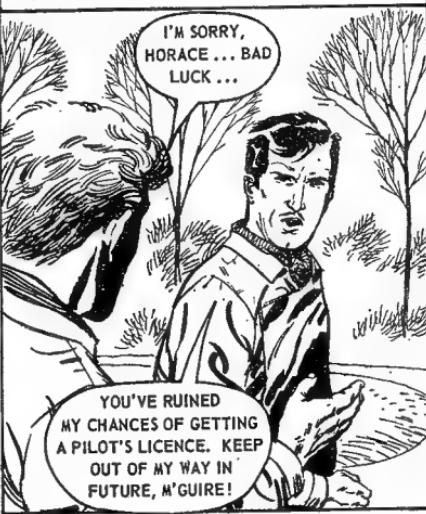
CONTROL YOURSELF,
RANKIN. YOU WERE AT FAULT.
YOU FORGOT THE RULE OF KEEPING
TO THE RIGHT ... AND FLEW STRAIGHT
INTO A COLLISION COURSE.
COME TO MY OFFICE,
BOTH OF YOU!

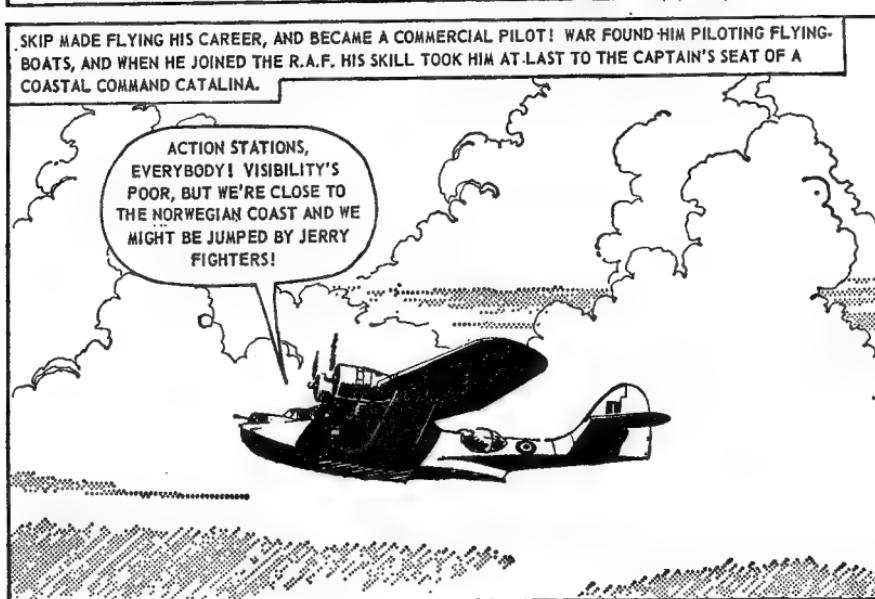


THE TRUTH IS YOU LOST YOUR NERVE, RANKIN. YOU LOST IT TWICE ... UP IN THE AIR AND WHEN YOU LANDED. FORTUNATELY THERE'S ONLY ONE SMASHED PLANE TO SHOW FOR IT INSTEAD OF TWO, AND NO LIVES LOST ... BUT I'M AFRAID YOU'LL NEVER MAKE A PILOT!



BUT, OUTSIDE, THE GOOD-NATURED SKIP LEARNED WITH A SHOCK THAT A SCHOOLDAYS FEUD HAD TURNED INTO BITTER ENMITY.





FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT SKIP M'GUIRE AND HIS CREW HAD BEEN IN THE AIR FOR EIGHT HOURS. IT HAD BEEN A LONG, MONOTONOUS SEARCH FOR ENEMY SHIPS OR U-BOATS, EYES STRAINING AT THE MISTY COLD SEA BELOW.

NOT OUR LUCKY DAY, CORNY. NOT EVEN A SIGHT OF A JERRY PATROL BOAT!

NEARLY THE END OF THE PATROL, ANYWAY, AND I WON'T BE SORRY TO GET BACK TO BASE. WILL WE EVER GET ANY ACTION?

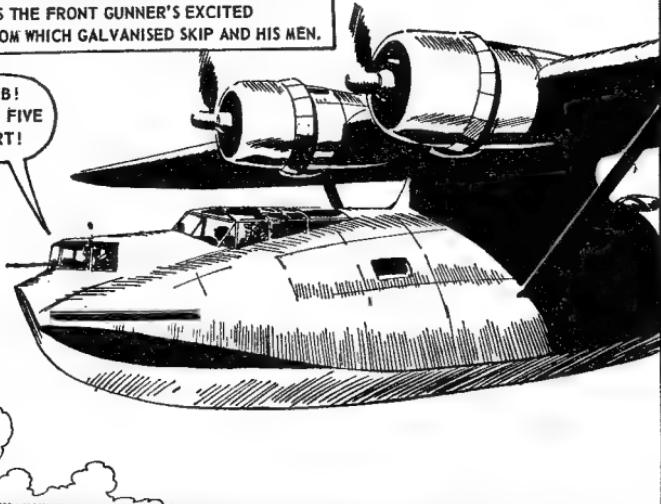
THE YOUNG CO-PILOT, FLYING-OFFICER CORNELIUS 'CORNY' KELLY, YAWNED AS HE LET HIS GAZE ROAM OVER THE FOAM-FLECKED WATER.

I'D ALMOST WELCOME A VISIT FROM A COUPLE OF MESSERSCHMITTS - JUST TO HEAR THE GUNS BANGING AWAY!

I'LL SETTLE FOR A U-BOAT MYSELF! REMEMBER THOSE TORPEDOED MERCHANT NAVY MEN WE PICKED UP THE OTHER DAY?

LIKE MOST OF HIS CREW, SKIP M'GUIRE WAS STRIVING TO KEEP AWAKE. BOREDOM WAS THE WORST ENEMY OF THE LONG-RANGING CATALINA CREWS. IT WAS THE FRONT GUNNER'S EXCITED VOICE OVER THE INTERCOM WHICH GALVANISED SKIP AND HIS MEN.

SKIPPER! A SUB! JUST SURFACING! FIVE DEGREES TO PORT!



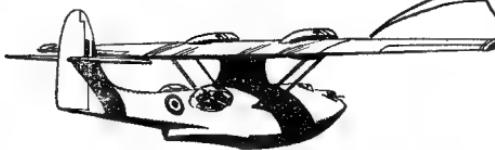
EX-FISHERMAN SAM 'SAILOR' KILLICK, TRAINED AS A SEAMAN FOR MOORING THE GIANT FLYING-BOAT, WAS BEST FITTED TO SPOT THE TELL-TALE PATCH OF FOAM FAR BELOW.

BY THUNDER,
YOU'RE RIGHT, SAILOR!
A U-BOAT FOR SURE!

THE CONNING-TOWER'S NEARLY CLEAR, BUT SHOULDN'T WE IDENTIFY FIRST?

NO NEED TO.
LAST GEN WAS THAT NO BRITISH SUBS WERE IN THIS AREA. THAT'S A U-BOAT ALL RIGHT!

IN THOUSANDS OF MILES OF PATROLLING, THIS WAS SKIP'S FIRST SIGHTING OF A U-BOAT. HIS CREW CAUGHT THE EXCITEMENT AS THEY CROUCHED AT ACTION STATIONS.



WE'LL DROP A DEPTH CHARGE QUICKLY, BEFORE THEY SPOT US. IF THAT DOESN'T SINK 'EM, WE'LL MAKE A RUN WITH ALL GUNS GOING!



MEN WERE ALREADY CLIMBING OUT OF THE CONNING-TOWER WHEN THE DEPTH CHARGE HURTLED DOWN AND EXPLODED.

THE CRAZY IDIOTS! THEY MUST BE BLIND! WE'VE BEEN DEPTH-CHARGED BY THE R.A.F.!



Sub Hunter

WHITE-FACED, CORNY KELLY, NOW GETTING A CLOSE-UP OF THE SUBMARINE'S CONNING-TOWER, KNEW THEY HAD MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE.



MEANWHILE, IN THE SUBMARINE'S CONTROL ROOM —

THAT DEPTH CHARGE SHOOK THE WHOLE VESSEL, SIR. IT'S SPLIT THE PRESSURE HULL AND THE ENGINE ROOM'S FLOODING!



SEIZING AN ALDIS LAMP, THE SUBMARINE COMMANDER SCRAMBLED UP TO THE CONNING-TOWER AND SAILOR KILLICK'S KEEN EYES PICKED UP HIS TERSE, BITTER MESSAGE.

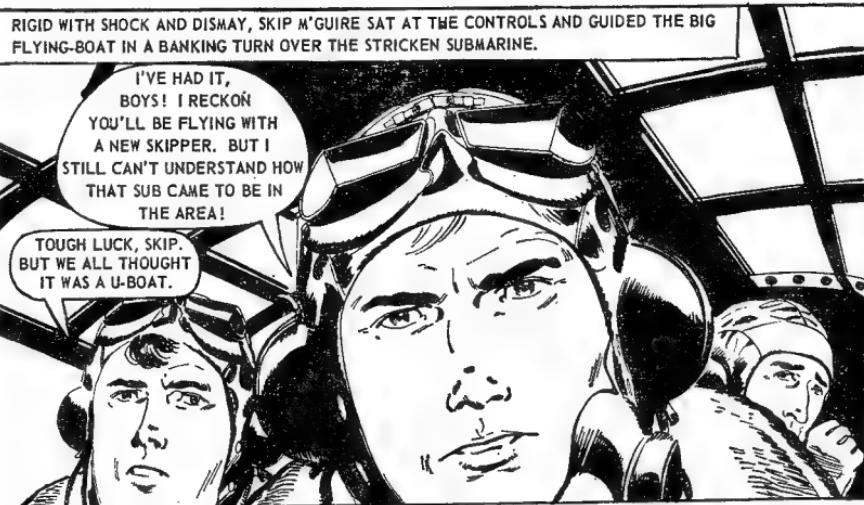


CHAPTER 2. Wrong Target

RIGID WITH SHOCK AND DISMAY, SKIP M'GUIRE SAT AT THE CONTROLS AND GUIDED THE BIG FLYING-BOAT IN A BANKING TURN OVER THE STRICKEN SUBMARINE.

I'VE HAD IT,
BOYS! I RECKON
YOU'LL BE FLYING WITH
A NEW SKIPPER. BUT I
STILL CAN'T UNDERSTAND HOW
THAT SUB CAME TO BE IN
THE AREA!

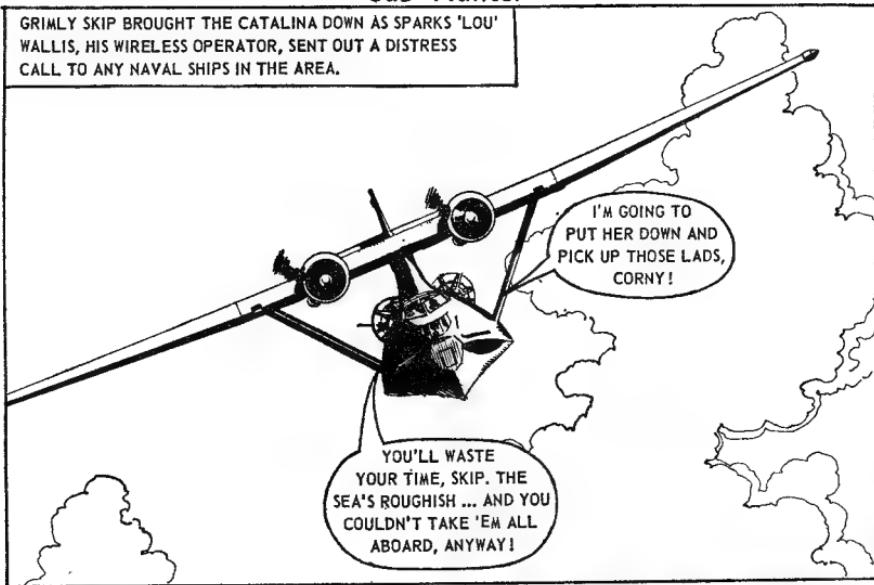
TOUGH LUCK, SKIP.
BUT WE ALL THOUGHT
IT WAS A U-BOAT.



UNABLE TO PROCEED, THE SUBMARINE WAS STILL AFLOAT. BUT CHOKING FUMES FROM THE BATTERIES FILLED HER HULL, AND THERE WAS NO OTHER COURSE FOR HER CREW BUT TO ABANDON HER.



GRIMLY SKIP BROUGHT THE CATALINA DOWN AS SPARKS 'LOU' WALLIS, HIS WIRELESS OPERATOR, SENT OUT A DISTRESS CALL TO ANY NAVAL SHIPS IN THE AREA.



INTENT AT HIS SET, SPARKS WALLIS SPOKE EDGILY WHILE THE NAVIGATOR WORKED OUT THEIR EXACT POSITION.

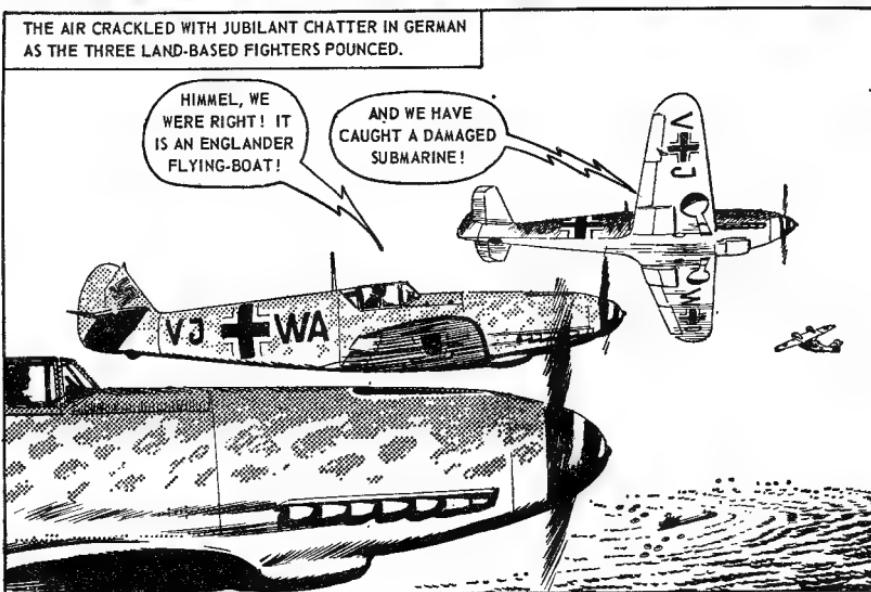


BUT MOMENTS LATER JOCK PERTH, THE FIRST ENGINEER, SIGHTED THREE SPECKS IN THE SKY FROM HIS ACTION STATION IN THE WAIST BLISTER OF THE CATALINA.



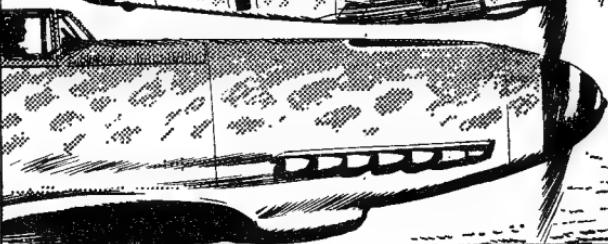
OCH, NOW WE'RE
IN REAL TROUBLE! THREE
PLANES, SKIPPER ... FIGHTERS,
YE KEN! COMING FROM LANDWARDS!
THEY MUST BE JERRIES!

THE AIR CRACKLED WITH JUBILANT CHATTER IN GERMAN AS THE THREE LAND-BASED FIGHTERS POUNCED.



HIMMEL, WE
WERE RIGHT! IT
IS AN ENGLANDER
FLYING-BOAT!

AND WE HAVE
CAUGHT A DAMAGED
SUBMARINE!



Sub Hunter

THE MEN LEFT ON THE SUBMARINE WERE ALREADY LEAPING TO THE ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS.

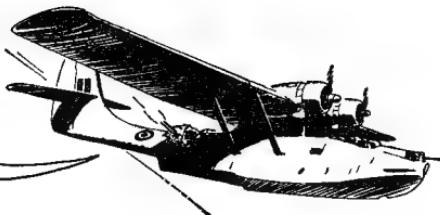


SKIP M'GUIRE FORGOT HIS DISMAY AND REMORSE OVER HIS TRAGIC ERROR. HIS TACTICS WERE PLAIN TO HIM.



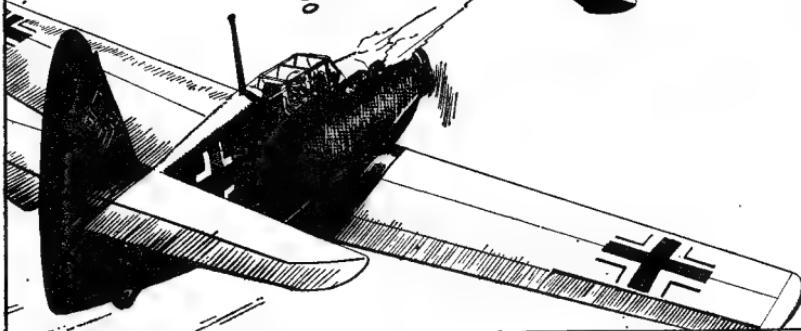
THE CATALINA COULD NOT MATCH THE MESSERSCHMITTS IN SPEED OR MANOEUVRE ... BUT ITS BRISTLING GUNS GAVE SKIP SOME HOPE.

OCH, THAT
PUT HIM OFF!
WE'RE NOT SO EASY,
YE KEN, JERRY!

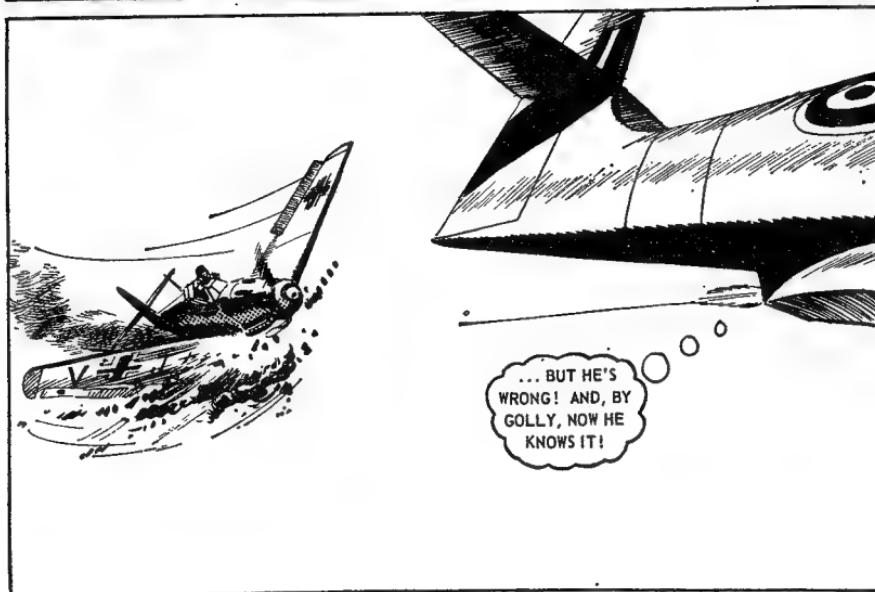


A SECOND FIGHTER TRIED TO ATTACK FROM ASTERN, USING THE HIGH TAIL OF THE CATALINA TO SCREEN HIM FROM THE BLISTER GUNS.

ACH, THOSE
GUNNERS IN THE
WAIST CANNOT SEE ME
NOW. ONE BURST WILL WRECK
THE TAIL UNIT!



BUT THE CAT'S NAVIGATOR HAD MOVED TO HIS ACTION STATION AT THE SINGLE MACHINE-GUN FIRING THROUGH A BLAST TUNNEL AT THE REAR OF THE HULL, DESIGNED TO PROTECT THE FLYING-BOAT'S BLIND SPOT.



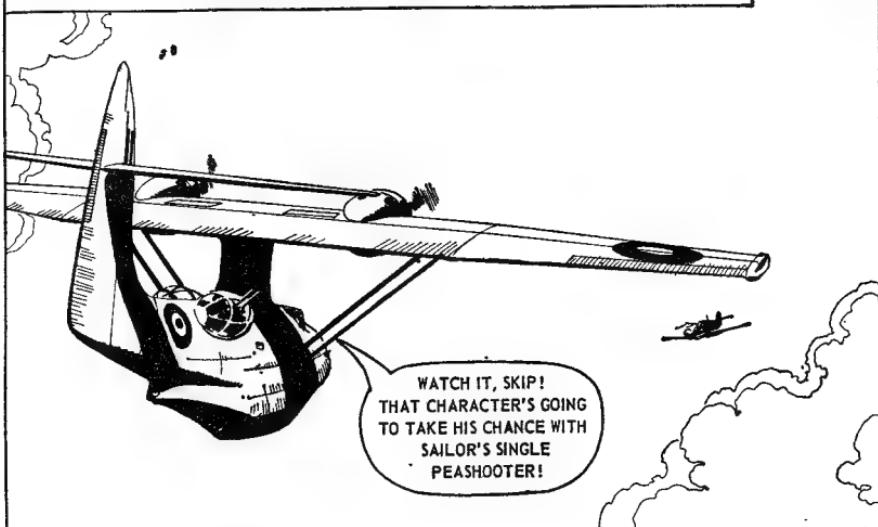
WATCHING THE AIR FIGHT, THE SUBMARINE CREW FORGOT
THEIR ANGER AT THE CREW OF THE CATALINA.

BY GLORY,
THEY'VE SHORTENED
THE ODDS! THE CAT'S
GOT A CHANCE AFTER ALL!
BUT KEEP YOUR GUNS READY
FOR A SHOT IF THE
JERRIES SLIP
INTO RANGE!



THE THIRD GERMAN DECIDED TO PIT HIS CANNONS AND MACHINE-GUNS AGAINST
THE NOSE OF THE CATALINA ... IN A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO SMASH THE PILOT'S COCKPIT.

WATCH IT, SKIP!
THAT CHARACTER'S GOING
TO TAKE HIS CHANCE WITH
SAILOR'S SINGLE
PEASHOOTER!



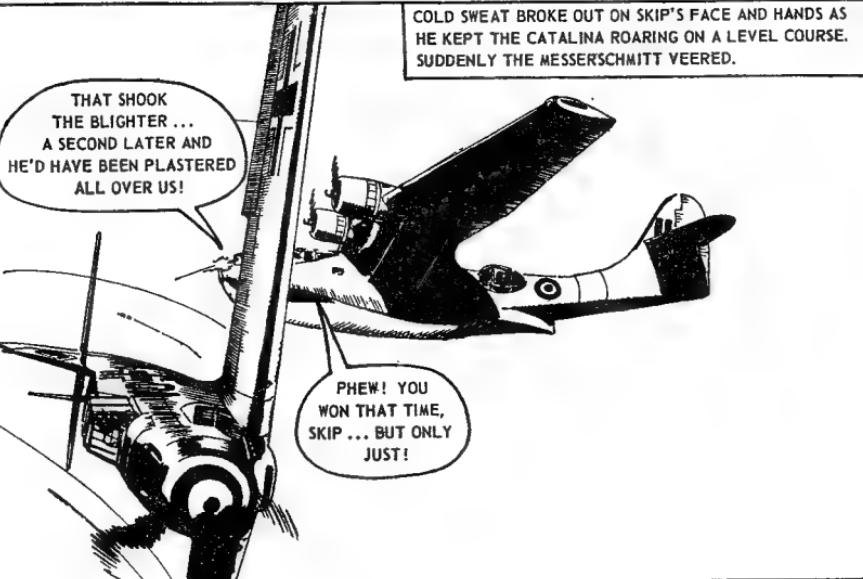
Sub Hunter

THE FIRST BURST FROM THE HURTLING FIGHTER SIZZLED OVER TOO HIGH, BUT CORNY KELLY FROZE IN HIS SEAT IN ALARM.

FOR PETE'S SAKE PULL AWAY, SKIP!

NOT LIKELY!
HE'LL BREAK BEFORE WE DO ... HIS FIGHTER
MUST FEEL LIKE AN EGGSHELL AGAINST OUR BULK!

COLD SWEAT BROKE OUT ON SKIP'S FACE AND HANDS AS HE KEPT THE CATALINA ROARING ON A LEVEL COURSE. SUDDENLY THE MESSERSCHMITT VEERED.



UNBIDDEN INTO SKIP'S MIND LEAPED A MEMORY OF
ANOTHER NEAR COLLISION ... YEARS AGO, IT SEEMED NOW.

THAT'S NOT
THE FIRST TIME IT'S
HAPPENED TO ME, CORNY.
BUT THE LAST TIME
IT WAS I WHO DID
THE DODGING!

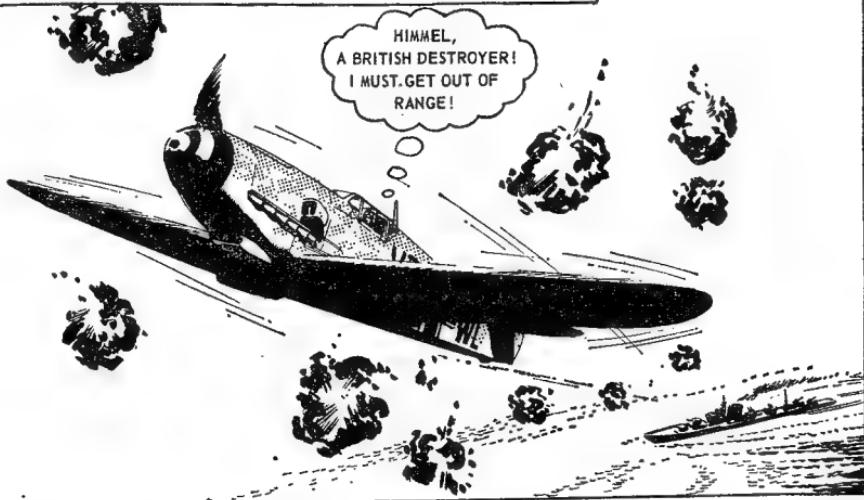
SKIP, THAT
BLOKE'S NERVE GOT
SO SHOCKED UP HE'S
HEADING STRAIGHT
INTO TROUBLE!

INTENT ON THE ATTACK ON THE FLYING-BOAT, THE GERMAN PILOT HAD
FORGOTTEN, OR NOT EVEN NOTICED, THAT MEN STILL MANNED THE
SUBMARINE'S GUNS. THE CRAFT WAS NEARLY SINKING ... BUT
THEY WERE STILL READY FOR BATTLE!

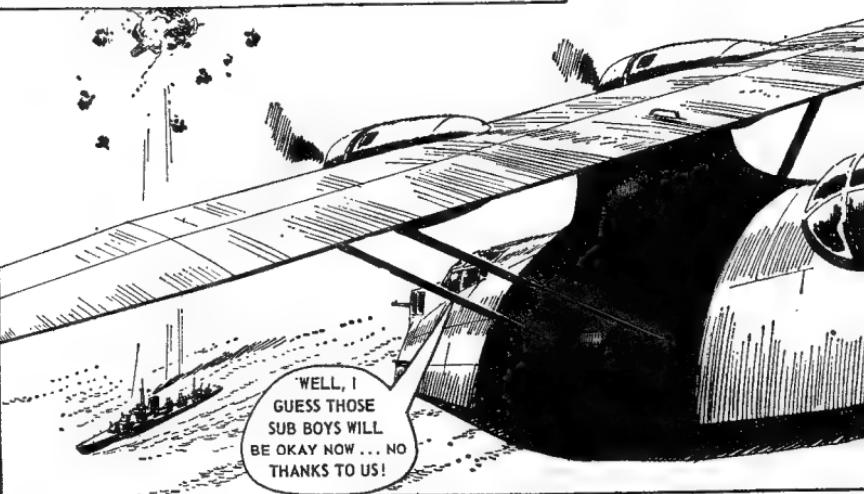
THE FIRST TIME
WE'VE HIT A FIGHTER ...
AND IT WOULD HAVE TO BE WHEN
WE'RE SINKING OURSELVES! GET TO
THE BOATS, MEN ... THERE'S
ONLY ONE JERRY LEFT!

Sub Hunter

ZOOMING HIGH FOR A DIVING ATTACK ON THE FLYING-BOAT, THE SURVIVING GERMAN HAD SEEN A SLIM SHAPE SLASHING THROUGH THE SEA FAR BELOW... EMERGING LIKE A WRAITH FROM THE MISTY DISTANCE.



BUT THE GERMAN HAD SIGHTED THE DESTROYER TOO LATE. THE CREW OF THE CATALINA SAW THE MESSERSCHMITT'S DOOM AT THE SAME MOMENT THAT THEY SAW THE DEADLY GREYHOUND OF THE SEA.



THERE WAS NO HOPE OF SAVING THE SUBMARINE. THE SKIPPER AND HIS MEN HAD GOT OFF JUST IN TIME BEFORE AN INTERNAL EXPLOSION RIPPED HER APART.

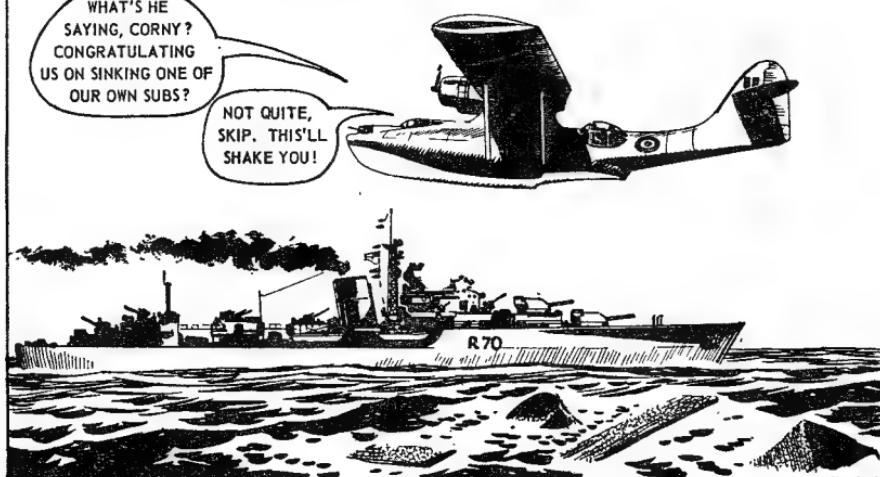
WELL, THOSE R.A.F. BOYS DID A GOOD JOB COVERING US FROM THOSE FIGHTERS. BUT I WOULDN'T LIKE TO BE IN THE PILOT'S SHOES!



SKIP FLEW IN CIRCLES OVER THE DESTROYER, WATCHING THE SUBMARINERS BEING TAKEN ABOARD AND READY TO WARD OFF ANY FURTHER AIR STRIKE. SOON THE DESTROYER'S ALDIS LAMP STARTED FLASHING.

WHAT'S HE SAYING, CORNY? CONGRATULATING US ON SINKING ONE OF OUR OWN SUBS?

NOT QUITE, SKIP. THIS'LL SHAKE YOU!



SWIFTLY CORNY KELLY SCRIBBLED DOWN THE MORSE SIGNAL AND PASSED IT TO SKIP M'GUIRE.

ADMIRALTY SENT SIGNAL TO ALL COMMANDOS THAT BRITISH SUBMARINE FORCE IS OPERATING ON SPECIAL MISSION IN NORWEGIAN WATERS.
NO SUB - REPEAT NO SUB - TO BE ATTACKED.
WHY DID YOU IGNORE

THIS IS CRAZY!
WE GOT NO SUCH SIGNAL.
SOMETHING WENT
WRONG SOMEWHERE, SKIP ... AND WE
CARRY THE CAN!

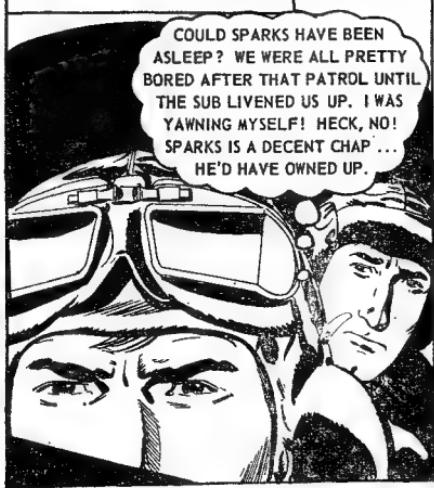
SIGNALLING THAT HE MUST RETURN TO BASE AND WOULD INVESTIGATE, SKIP HANDED THE CONTROLS OVER TO CORNY KELLY AND WENT AFT FOR A PRIVATE WORD WITH HIS WIRELESS OPERATOR ...

YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY
SURE NOTHING CAME THROUGH,
SPARKS?

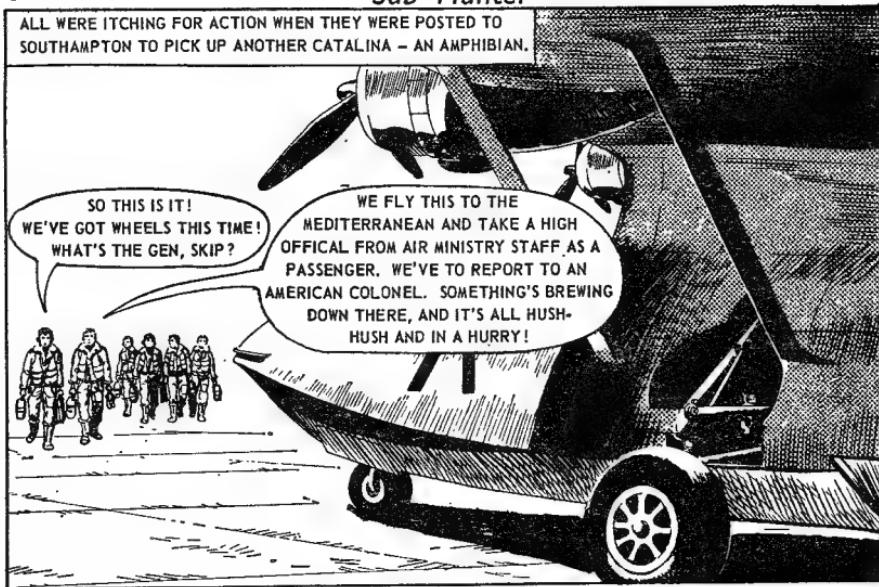
DEAD SURE, SKIPPER!
MIND YOU, THERE WAS A
SPELL WHEN THE SET SEEMED
DEAD. I FOUND A 'SHORT' WHICH
MAY HAVE CAUSED THE
TROUBLE.



GLOOMILY SKIP WENT BACK TO THE CONTROLS, BUT AS HE FLEW BACK TO THE INEVITABLE INQUIRY AND UNPLEASANTNESS THAT WOULD AWAIT THEM, A TINY SUSPICION FORMED IN HIS MIND.



ALL WERE ITCHING FOR ACTION WHEN THEY WERE POSTED TO SOUTHAMPTON TO PICK UP ANOTHER CATALINA - AN AMPHIBIAN.



SKIP SAW A GLINT OF AMUSEMENT IN WING-COMMANDER RANKIN'S DARK EYES. HE SAW ALSO THAT RANKIN HAD NOT FORGOTTEN THEIR LAST ENCOUNTER.



I HEAR YOU HAD SOME
TROUBLE WITH A SUBMARINE,
M'GUIRE. BAD LUCK! FORTUNATELY
WE'RE NOT SUB HUNTING
ON THIS TRIP!

MY CREW AND I PREFER TO
FORGET THAT EPISODE ... SIR!

RANKIN TURNED AWAY WITH A STUDIED SUPERIOR GESTURE.

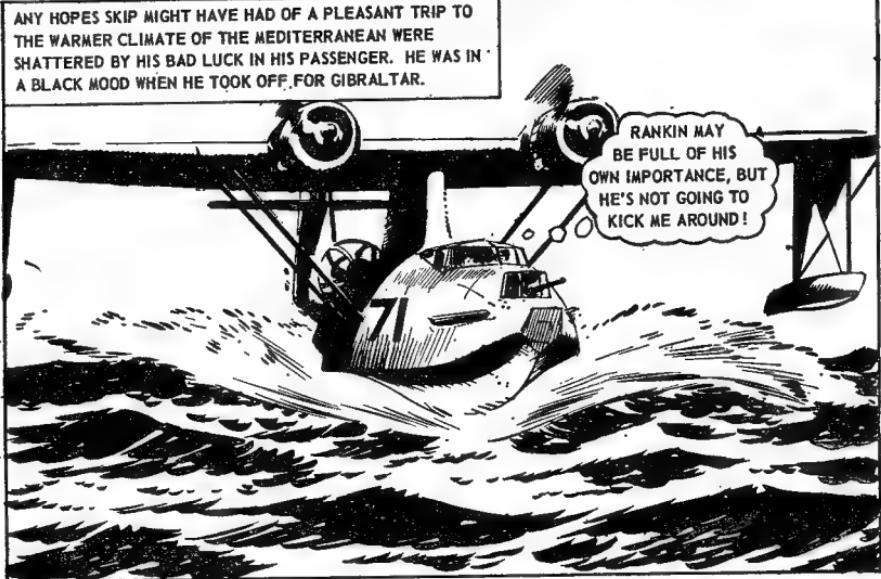


WELL, LET'S GO,
SHALL WE? NO TIME
TO WASTE. I'VE GOT
TO BE IN GIBRALTAR
JUST AS QUICKLY AS
YOU CAN GET ME
THERE!



BIG-HEADED CLOT!
HE'S ENJOYING THIS ...
PULLING RANK ON ME AND
KNOWING I'VE ALREADY GOT
A BIG BLACK MARK
AGAINST ME!

ANY HOPES SKIP MIGHT HAVE HAD OF A PLEASANT TRIP TO THE WARMER CLIMATE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN WERE SHATTERED BY HIS BAD LUCK IN HIS PASSENGER. HE WAS IN A BLACK MOOD WHEN HE TOOK OFF FOR GIBRALTAR.



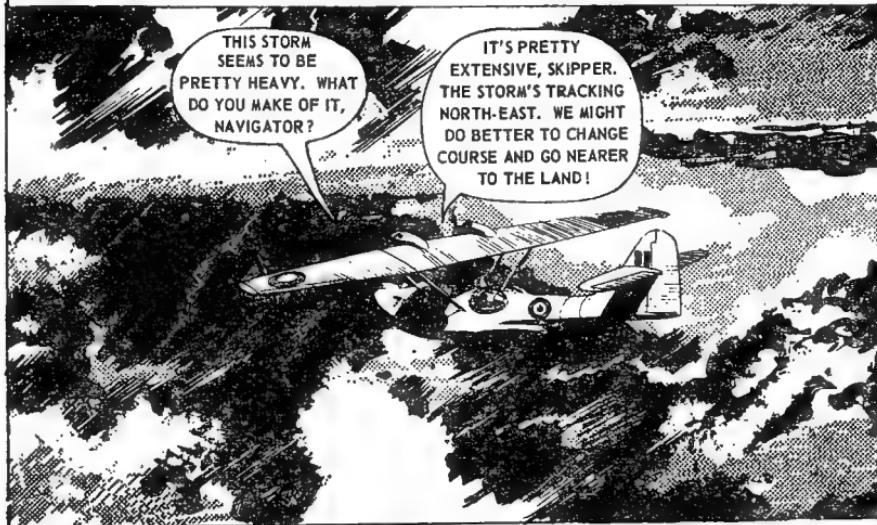
RANKIN MAY
BE FULL OF HIS
OWN IMPORTANCE, BUT
HE'S NOT GOING TO
KICK ME AROUND!

CHAPTER 3. Bay of Biscay Battle

AS THE CATALINA CLIMBED OVER THE CHANNEL AND HEADED FAR OUT INTO THE BAY OF BISCAY, WING-COMMANDER RANKIN SPOKE COLDLY.



THEY FLEW ON STEADILY FOR HOUR AFTER HOUR, FAR FROM ENEMY-HELD COASTS ... BUT THE GATHERING BLACK CLOUDS AND LIGHTNING OF A STORM FRONT MADE SKIP THINK ABOUT CHANGING COURSE.



THIS STORM
SEEMS TO BE
PRETTY HEAVY. WHAT
DO YOU MAKE OF IT,
NAVIGATOR?

IT'S PRETTY
EXTENSIVE, SKIPPER.
THE STORM'S TRACKING
NORTH-EAST. WE MIGHT
DO BETTER TO CHANGE
COURSE AND GO NEARER
TO THE LAND!



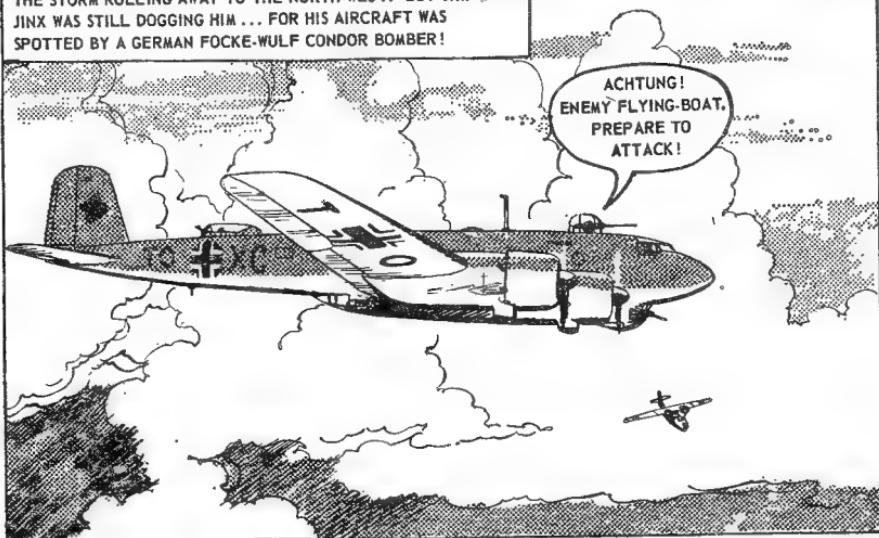
SKIP TURNED TO RANKIN.



MAY I REMIND YOU, WING-COMMANDER, THAT I AM THE CAPTAIN OF THIS AIRCRAFT? I DON'T PROPOSE TO USE UP FUEL CLIMBING TO OUR MAXIMUM CEILING, BECAUSE THE STORM MAY WELL STRETCH HIGHER THAN THAT! NOR DO I PROPOSE TO RISK YOUR LIFE OR OURS, OR OUR AIRCRAFT, BY GOING DOWN TO SEA LEVEL ... BECAUSE CONDITIONS MAY WELL BE WORSE DOWN THERE!



AN HOUR LATER THE CATALINA FLEW OUT INTO SUNSHINE, WITH THE STORM ROLLING AWAY TO THE NORTH-WEST. BUT SKIP'S JINX WAS STILL DOGGING HIM ... FOR HIS AIRCRAFT WAS SPOTTED BY A GERMAN FOCKE-WULF CONDOR BOMBER!



Sub Hunter

35

NOT YET HAVING SEEN THE CONDOR, SKIP AGAIN ADDRESSED RANKIN,

YOU SEE,
WING-COMMANDER,
IT'S MUCH NICER
OUTSIDE NOW!

YOU'RE TOO
CLOSE TO THE ENEMY ...
MUCH TOO CLOSE! IF
ANYTHING HAPPENS ...

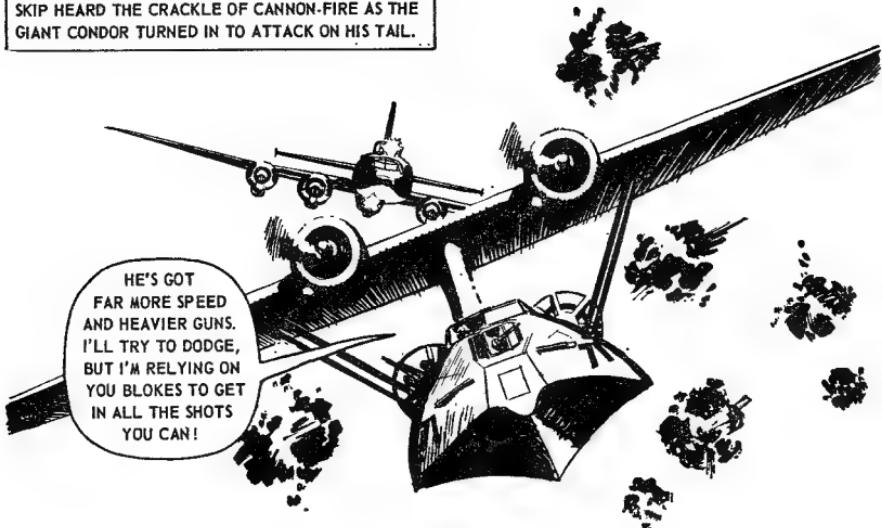
THEN A YELL FROM JOCK PERTH IN THE WAIST BLISTER ALERTED ALL THE CREW.

SKIPPER ...
THERE'S A DIRTY
GREAT CONDOR
BEARING DOWN
ON US!



THOSE KITES
BRISTLE WITH HEAVY
MACHINE-GUNS AND CANNON!
IT COULD BLOW US
TO PIECES!

SKIP HEARD THE CRACKLE OF CANNON-FIRE AS THE GIANT CONDOR TURNED IN TO ATTACK ON HIS TAIL.



SKIP FORGOT RANKIN FROM THEN ON IN THE HEAT OF THE ACTION. HIS SKILFUL HANDLING OF THE CATALINA CAUSED THE NEXT BURST FROM THE CONDOR TO MISS, AND GAVE HIS WAIST GUNNERS A CHANCE.



WINCING UNDER THE CLATTER OF THE CATALINA'S GUNS AND THE CRACKLE OF THE CONDOR'S FIRE, RANKIN COWERED LOWER IN HIS SEAT.



NEXT MOMENT, A CANNON-SHELL RIPPED THROUGH THE HULL AND EXPLODED WITH AN EAR-SPLITTING BANG.

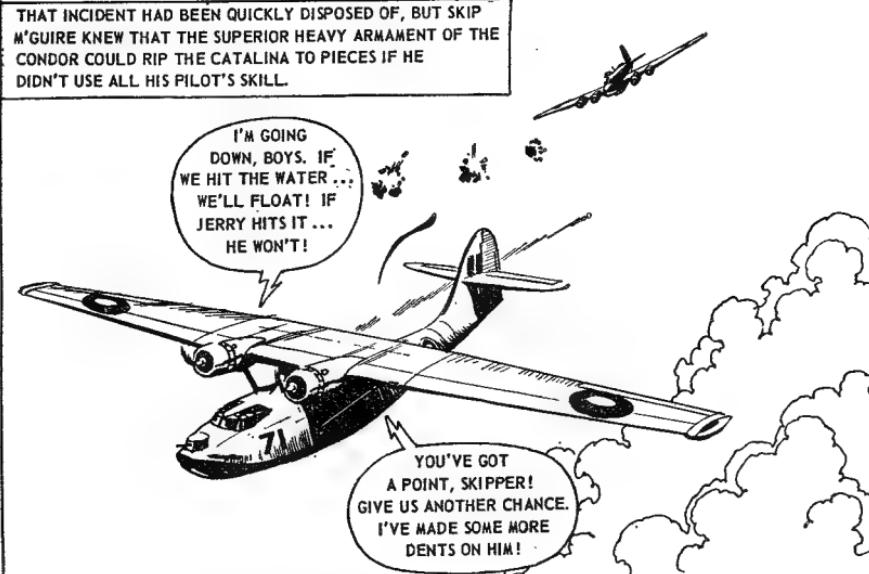


Sub Hunter

PROMPT ACTION BY THE WIRELESS OPERATOR PREVENTED A DISASTROUS FIRE.

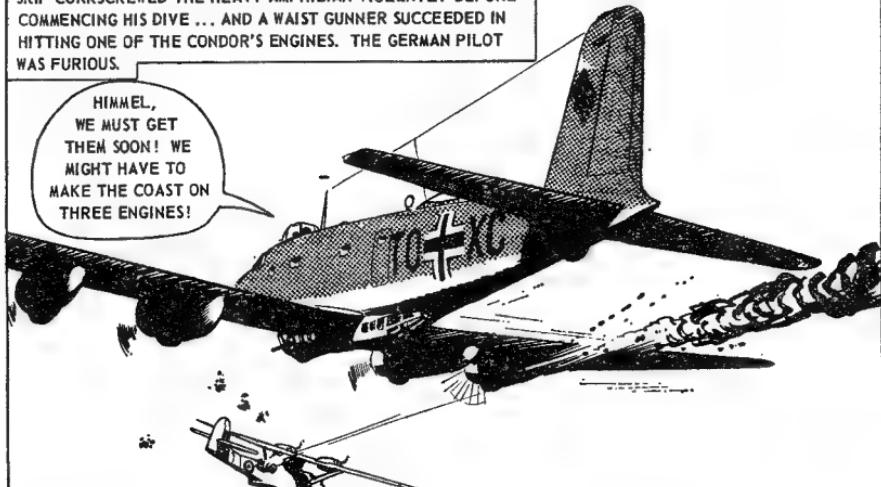


THAT INCIDENT HAD BEEN QUICKLY DISPOSED OF, BUT SKIP M'GUIRE KNEW THAT THE SUPERIOR HEAVY ARMAMENT OF THE CONDOR COULD RIP THE CATALINA TO PIECES IF HE DIDN'T USE ALL HIS PILOT'S SKILL.



SKIP CORKSCREWED THE HEAVY AMPHIBIAN VIOLENTLY BEFORE COMMENCING HIS DIVE ... AND A WAIST GUNNER SUCCEEDED IN HITTING ONE OF THE CONDOR'S ENGINES. THE GERMAN PILOT WAS FURIOUS.

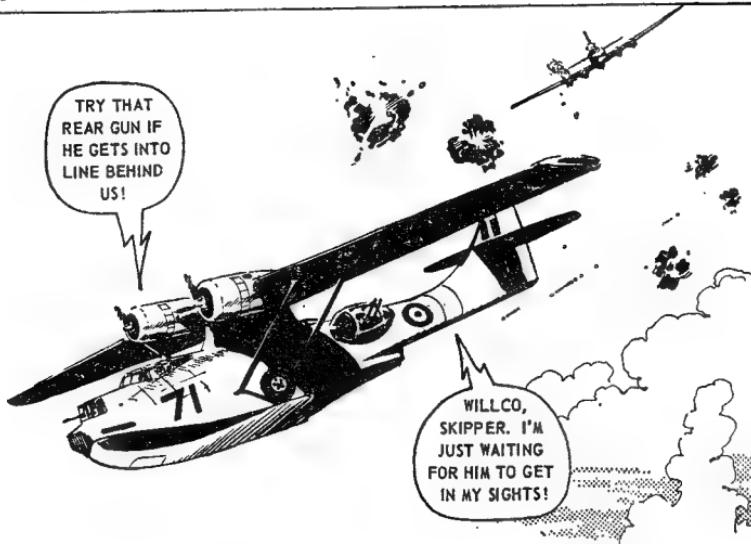
HIMMEL,
WE MUST GET
THEM SOON! WE
MIGHT HAVE TO
MAKE THE COAST ON
THREE ENGINES!



LOWER AND LOWER SKIP CIRCLED TOWARDS THE HEAVING SEA ... AND THE CONDOR HUNG ON GRIMLY.

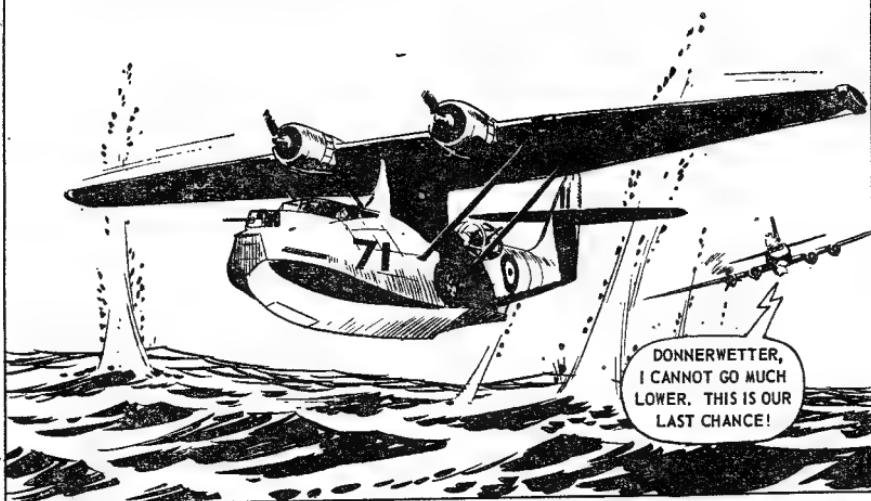
TRY THAT
REAR GUN IF
HE GETS INTO
LINE BEHIND US!

WILLCO,
SKIPPER, I'M
JUST WAITING
FOR HIM TO GET
IN MY SIGHTS!



Sub Hunter

AT LAST THE CATALINA WAS ALMOST SKIMMING THE SEA, AND THE GERMAN PILOT BEGAN TO HAVE DOUBTS.



IN A LAST DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO GET THE CATALINA IN THE SIGHTS OF HIS FORWARD CANNON, THE CONDOR PILOT HEADED FOR THE AMPHIBIAN'S HIGH TAIL. THIS GAVE THE BRITISH REAR-GUNNER THE CHANCE HE HAD BEEN WAITING FOR!



VISION VANISHED FOR THE CONDOR PILOT AS THE BURST HIT HIS WINDSCREEN.

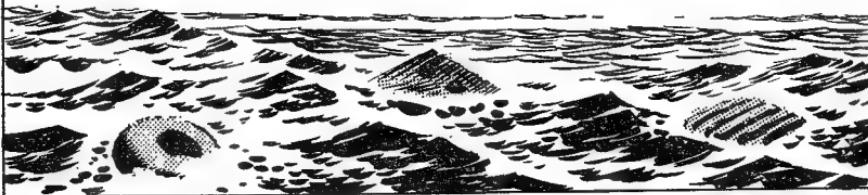
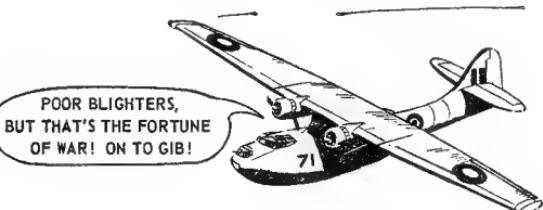


AND A SHOUT OF TRIUMPH MARKED THE END OF THE CONDOR AS SKIP LIFTED THE CATALINA AWAY FROM THE SEA.

WE'VE DOWNED
HIM! HE'S IN THE DRINK
... SMASHED UP!



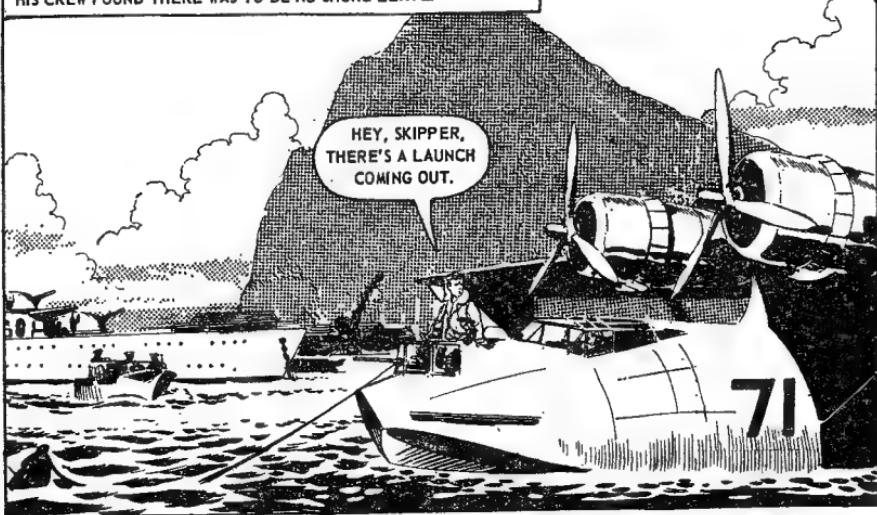
SKIP CIRCLED, BUT ONLY A RING OF FOAM AND OIL AND FLOATING DEBRIS MARKED THE GRAVE OF THE CONDOR.



RELAXING, SKIP M'GUIRE HANDED OVER TO CORNY KELLY, HIS CO-PILOT, AND WENT AFT TO HAVE A LOOK AT THE DAMAGE.



BUT EVENTS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WERE MOVING FAST, AND WHEN THE CATALINA MOORED IN GIBRALTAR HARBOUR, SKIP AND HIS CREW FOUND THERE WAS TO BE NO SHORE LEAVE.



SKIP FOUND A BRUSQUE, STOCKY AMERICAN STANDING IN THE LAUNCH.





WITHIN A FEW HOURS SKIP TOUCHED DOWN ON AN AIRFIELD NEAR ALGIERS, AND THIS SEEMED TO PRESENT HIM WITH A GOOD OPPORTUNITY.

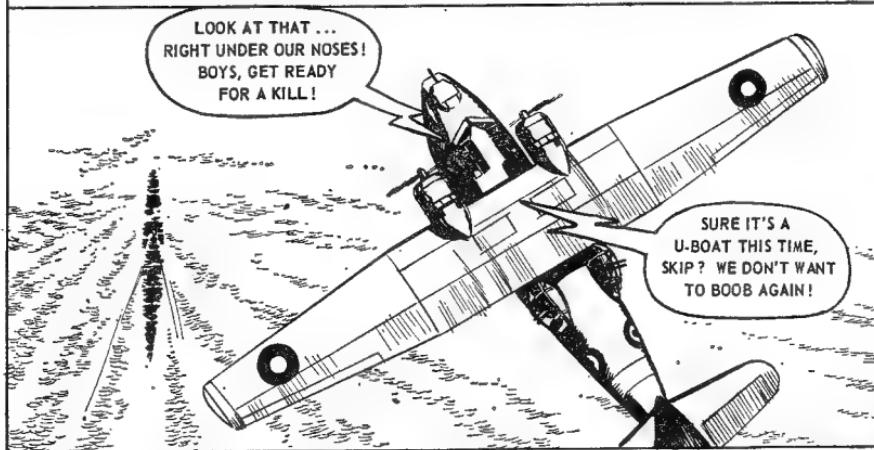


COLONEL CULVER MOVED FAST. THAT NIGHT, SKIP WAS ORDERED TO HIS OFFICE.



CHAPTER 4. U-Boat's Doom

TWO DAYS LATER, CIRCLING WIDE OVER A LARGE TROOP CONVOY, THE CREW OF SKIP'S CATALINA SIGHTED THEIR FIRST SUBMARINE ... A SLIM, SINISTER SHAPE PLAINLY VISIBLE IN THE CLEAR, SUNLIT WATER.



SKIP M'GUIRE WAS IN NO DOUBT THIS TIME.

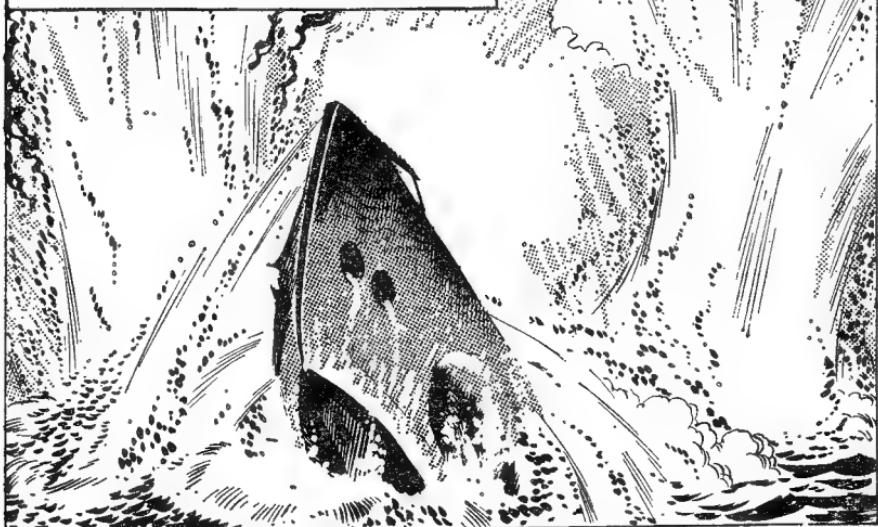
OF COURSE IT'S AN ENEMY SUB!
I'VE CHECKED THAT NONE OF OURS ARE
IN THE VICINITY. IT'S COMING UP
TO PERISCOPE DEPTH TO STALK OUR
CONVOY ... OTHERWISE IT'D BE CRAWLING ON
THE SEA BED! ANY MINUTE NOW AND IT'LL
BE LOOSING TORPEDOES!



THE U-BOAT COMMANDER SWUNG HIS
PERISCOPE SLOWLY, HIS GAZE RIVETED ON
THE PRIZE WHICH MOVED MAJESTICALLY
ACROSS THE HORIZON.

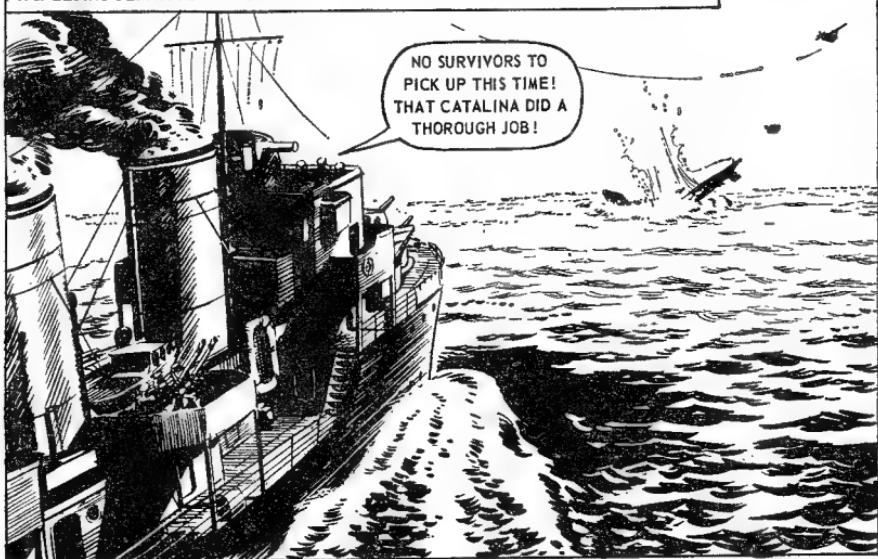


THE U-BOAT COMMANDER NEVER SAW THE LOOMING SHADOW OF THE GIANT FLYING-BOAT WHICH BRACKETED HIS VESSEL WITH TWO DEPTH CHARGES.



A SPEEDING DESTROYER REACHED THE SCENE IN TIME TO SEE THE END OF THE U-BOAT.

NO SURVIVORS TO
PICK UP THIS TIME!
THAT CATALINA DID A
THOROUGH JOB!



SKIP M'GUIRE CARRIED ON WITH HIS PATROL, FEELING THAT SOMEHOW HE HAD ATONED FOR THE DISASTER OFF NORWAY.

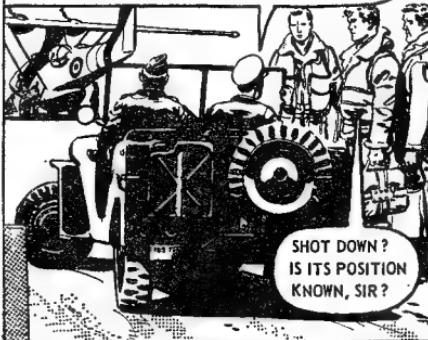


HOURS LATER THE CATALINA RETURNED TO BASE WITHOUT ANOTHER SIGHTING. BUT THERE WAS A JUBILANT PARTY THAT NIGHT. NEXT DAY, WHEN THE CREW WERE ABOUT TO START ANOTHER PATROL, EVERY MAN FELT ANOTHER U-BOAT 'KILL' AWAITED THEM UNTIL ...



SWIFTLY THE COLONEL EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD A CHANGE OF MISSION FOR SKIP'S CREW. HE HAD SENT RANKIN TO CAIRO IN A BOMBER WITH IMPORTANT SECRET PAPERS OUTLINING AIR DISPOSITIONS FOR THE COMING INVASION OF SICILY.

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT, THAT DARNED BOMBER GOT JUMPED BY JERRY FIGHTERS SOMEWHERE OVER THE DESERT. IT'S BEEN SHOT DOWN. I'VE GOT TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO RANKIN!



NOPE! I'VE GOT EVERY PLANE I CAN SPARE LOOKING FOR THE WRECKAGE. BUT YOU'VE GOT WHEELS ON YOUR CAT ... AND A LONG RANGE. GET OUT THERE AND SEARCH, M'GUIRE! RANKIN MIGHT BE EXPENDABLE ... BUT THOSE SECRET PAPERS AREN'T!



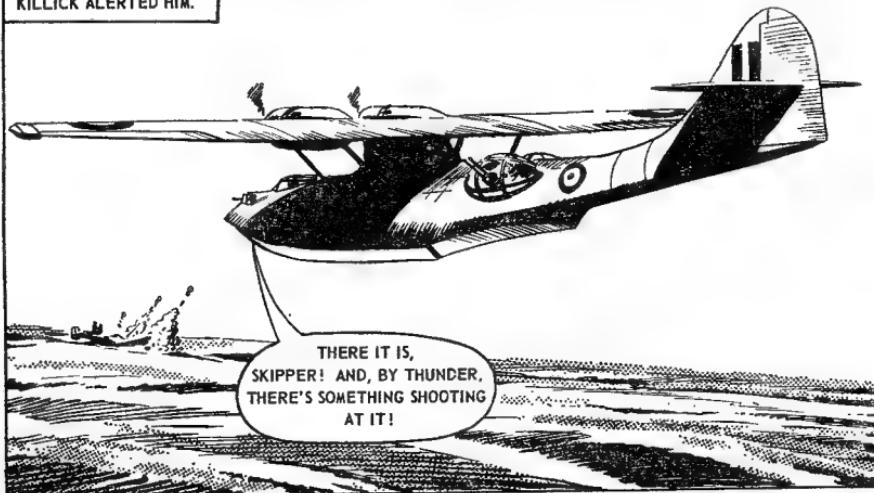
THE CREW BROKE INTO A RUN FOR THE CATALINA ... BUT THE COLONEL HALTED SKIP M'GUIRE.



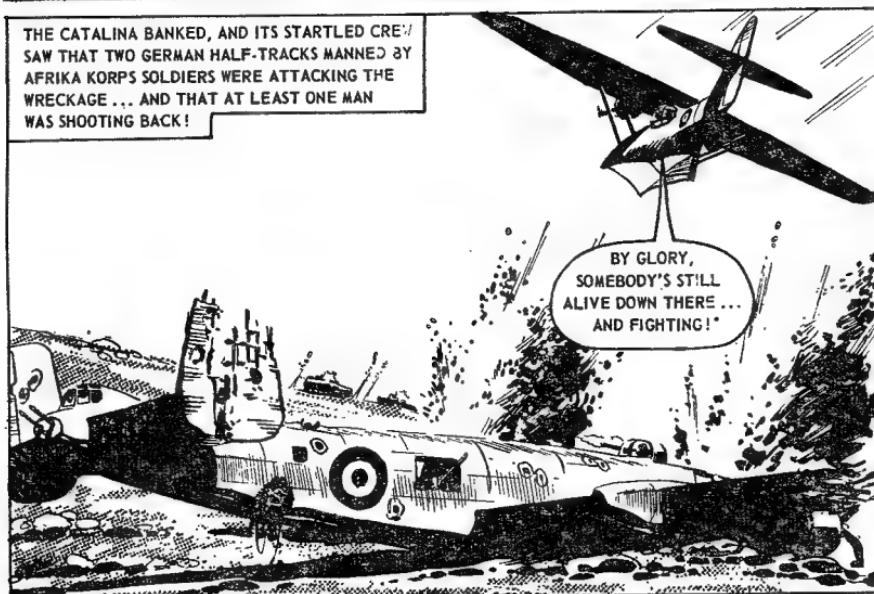
GOOD LUCK, SON!
AND THERE'S NO NEED TO TELL RANKIN THAT EVEN IF YOU BRING HIM BACK I'LL BE LOOKING FOR A NEW AIDE! I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF RANKIN.



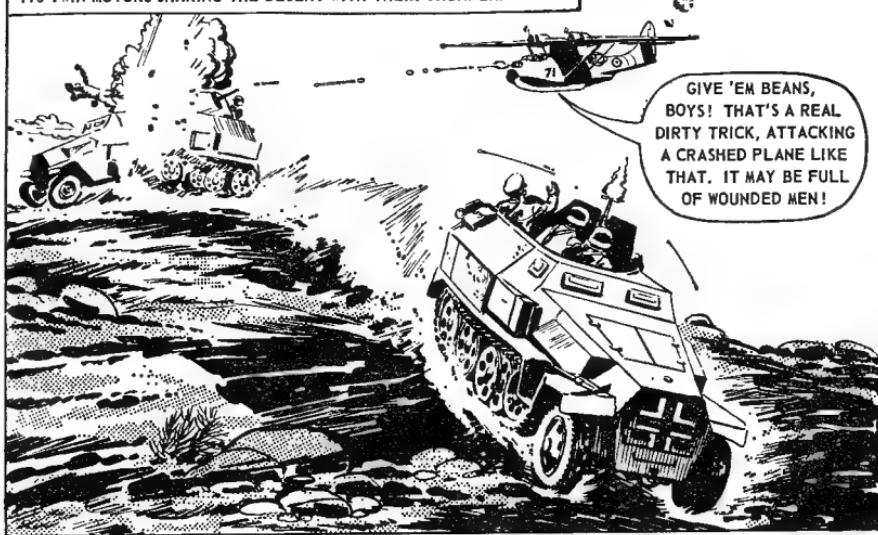
SKIP HAD BEEN TOLD THAT THE LOST BOMBER HAD TAKEN A COURSE DELIBERATELY DEEP INTO THE DESERT TO AVOID GERMAN FIGHTER ACTIVITY NEAR THE COAST. HE FLEW FIVE HUNDRED MILES ON QUARTERING COURSES OVER THE SUN-SCORCHED SAND AND ROCK BEFORE A SHOUT FROM SAILOR KILICK ALERTED HIM.



THE CATALINA BANKED, AND ITS STARTLED CREW SAW THAT TWO GERMAN HALF-TRACKS MANNED BY AFRIKA KORPS SOLDIERS WERE ATTACKING THE WRECKAGE ... AND THAT AT LEAST ONE MAN WAS SHOOTING BACK!



FILLED WITH FURY, SKIP M'GUIRE SENT THE CATALINA ROARING DOWN, ITS TWIN MOTORS SHAKING THE DESERT WITH THEIR THUNDER.



THE CATALINA THUNDERED PAST, ITS WAIST GUNNERS POURING FIRE INTO THE GERMANS.



Sub Hunter

THE GERMANS WERE ROUTED, AND SKIP ASTONISHED HIS CREW BY TAKING THE CATALINA IN TO LAND ON SHIFTING SAND AND STONES.



THE AIR GUNNER WHO HAD FOUGHT A LONE BATTLE AGAINST THE AFRIKA KORPS PATROL STOOD WAITING FOR THEM AS THEY RUSHED FROM THE HALTED CATALINA. RANKIN WAS WITH HIM.



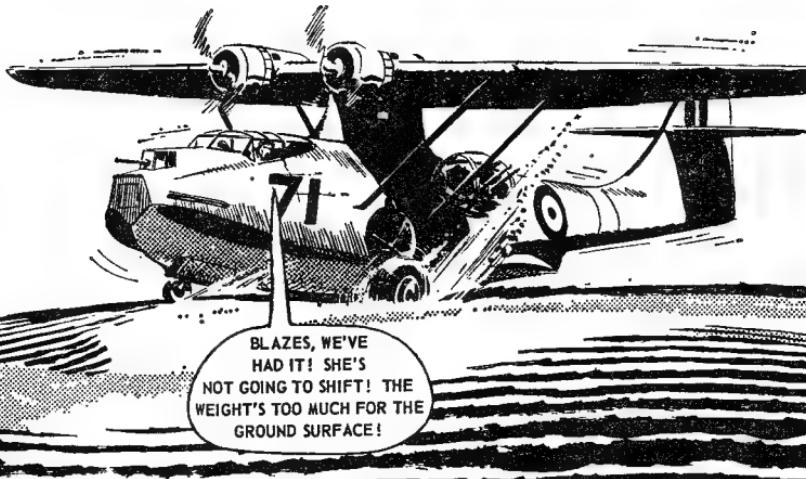


GENTLY THE CATALINA CREW CARRIED THE WOUNDED MEN, INCLUDING WING-COMMANDER RANKIN, TO THE AMPHIBIAN. THEY PERFORMED THE GRIM TASK OF BURYING THE DEAD MEN ... AND THEN SKIP M'GUIRE SET HIMSELF TO THE TASK OF GETTING THE HEAVY AIRCRAFT OFF THE GROUND.



Sub Hunter

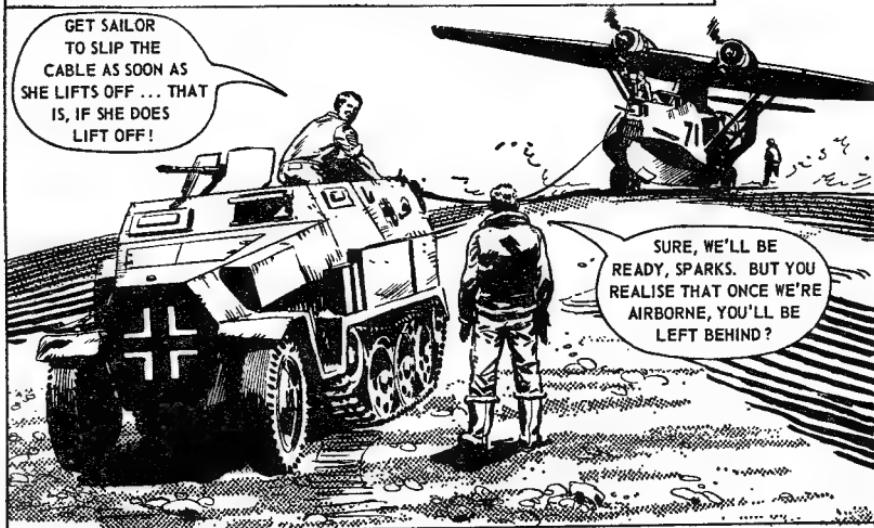
BUT AS SKIP OPENED THE THROTTLES AND THE PROPELLERS BLASTED BACK A HURRICANE OF SAND, THE CATALINA ROCKED GENTLY ... AND DID NOT BUDGE.



NEXT MOMENT SKIP FOUND SPARKS WALLIS, THE RADIO OPERATOR, BESIDE HIM.



WITHIN FIFTEEN MINUTES THE RADIO OPERATOR WAS READY TO PUT HIS DARING PLAN INTO OPERATION ... THE PLAN TO LIFT THE HEAVY CATALINA OFF THE GROUND.



Sub Hunter

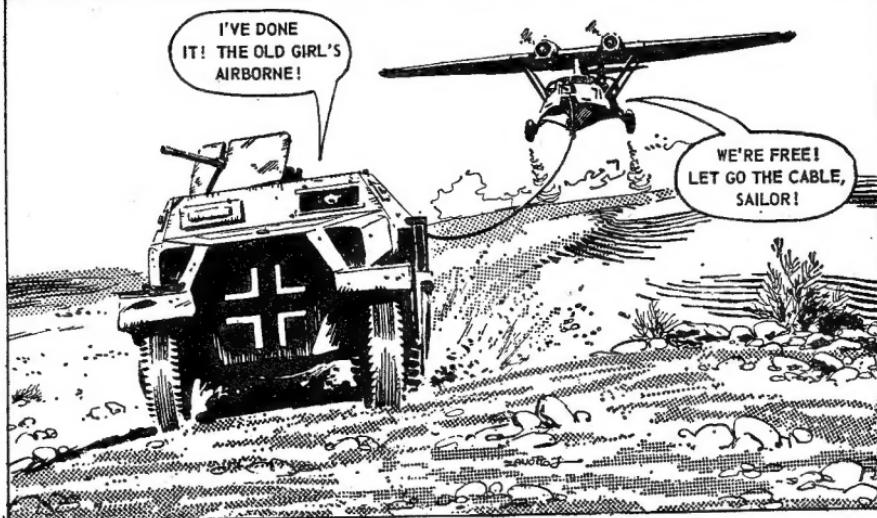
BUT AS HE WALKED SLOWLY TO THE AIRCRAFT ANOTHER THOUGHT STRUCK SKIP M'GUIRE.



SKIP SAID NO MORE. SPARKS WALLIS HAD PROVED HIMSELF IN WAR, AND THAT WAS ENOUGH FOR HIM. HE GUNNED THE THROTTLES OF THE GIANT FLYING-BOAT, AND SPARKS EDGED THE HALF-TRACK FORWARD, INCH BY INCH, TAKING THE STRAIN.



GRADUALLY THE CATALINA INCHED OUT OF THE SAND, ITS ENGINES ROARING. GRADUALLY THE HALF-TRACK INCREASED SPEED UNTIL SPARKS FOUND A HARD PATCH AND FELT THE VEHICLE MOVING FASTER.



AND SPARKS FELT THE WIND OF THE ROARING GIANT AS IT CLIMBED OVER HIM.



Sub Hunter

AIRBORNE, SKIP GOT THE NAVIGATOR TO WIRELESS ALL OTHER SEARCH PLANES WITH DETAILS OF SPARKS' POSITION, AND WHEN HE REACHED BASE THE CATALINA SKIPPER HEARD THAT HIS RADIO OPERATOR HAD BEEN PICKED UP BY A LIGHT SPOTTER PLANE WHICH HAD LANDED WITH EASE.

THANKS TO SPARKS,
THOSE WOUNDED LADS HAVE
GOT A GOOD CHANCE. HE
DESERVES A MEDAL FOR THAT
JOB, AND I'M GOING
TO SEE HE GETS IT!



LATER, AFTER SPARKS HAD BEEN REUNITED WITH THE CREW AND SKIP M'GUIRE MADE HIS REQUEST TO COLONEL CULVER, HE RECEIVED A PERSONAL SURPRISE.

YOUR WIRELESS MAN'LL GET HIS CITATION,
M'GUIRE. MEANWHILE, HERE'S NEWS FOR YOU.
I'M SENDING RANKIN BACK TO THE UNITED KINGDOM ...
HE'S MORE FITTED FOR A DESK JOB THAN AN OPERATIONAL
COMMAND. YOU'RE MY NEW AIDE ... AND YOUR FIRST JOB
IS TO DELIVER THESE PAPERS TO CAIRO, PRONTO!

A TRIP TO
CAIRO! COLONEL, YOU'VE
MADE MY DAY!



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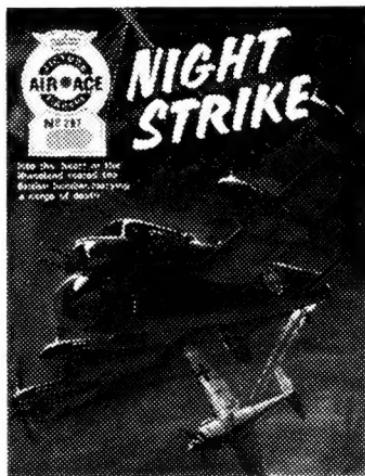
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